

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM, MR
SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS: MAURITANIA ACTION PLAN

REF: STATE 142616

1. AF/W DRAFT ACTION PLAN IS FIRST RATE SYNTHESIS OF MISSION
REPORTING AND WASHINGTON PERCEPTIONS. FOLLOWING OBSERVATIONS
AND DRAFT LANGUAGE ARE OFFERD FOR DESK/BUREAU CONSIDERATION AND
DECISION:

2. OBSERVATIONS:

(A) PARA 2: CORROBORATING BACKGROUND: FRENCH ROMAN CATHOLIC
BISHOP, HIS STAFF OF PRIESTS AND NUNS, AND THEIR SEVERAL
CONGREGATIONS HETTERED AROUND COUNTRY WORSHIP OPENLY AND FREELY
AND OPERATE NUMBER OF CHILD CARE FACILITIES. NOUAKCHOTT CATHEDRAL
IS ON PROMINENT CORNER ACROSS FROM FOREIGN MINISTER'S RESIDENCE.

(B) PARA 2: AMENDEMENT TO 1961 CONSTITUTION ESTABLISHING
MAURITANIN PEOPLES PARTY AS SOLE PERMITTED POLITICAL PARTY
WAS ENACTED FEBRUARY 12, 1965, RETROACTIVE TO FOUNDING OF PPM
DECEMBER 25, 1961. PRESENT DRAFT WHILE TECHNICALLY CORRECT IN
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STRICT LEGAL SENSE COVERS OVER 5-6 YEARS POLITICAL EVOLUTION
WHICH GWRHCISE TO SINGLE PARTY.

(C) PARA 2: BACKGROUND AND COMMENT ON SINGLE PARTY SYSTEM
WHICH MIGHT PROFITABLY BE INCORPORATED INTO ACTION PLAN:

(I) BY 1964, ORIGINAL MULTIPARTY POLITICAL SYSTEM HAD EVOLVED
INTO COLLECTION OF PARTIES ROOTED IN PARTICULAR ETHNIC

GROUPS REPRESENTING ONLY INTERESTS OF THAT GROUP AGAINST ALL OTHERS. MULTIPARTY SYSTEM THUS BECAME SIGNIFICANT FORCE FOCUSING ETHNIC TENSIONS AND UNDERMINING NATIONAL COHESION. WITHOUT FORCLOSING OPTIONS AVAILABLE AT LATER STAGE OF NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, MAURITANIAN GOVERNMENT (GIRM) DECIDED THAT PRESERVATION OF NATIONAL ENTITY AND DEVELOPMENT OF SENSE OF NATIONHOOD REQUIRED ELIMINATION ETHNIC-BASED POLITICAL SYSTEM. (II) ALTHOUGH GOVERNMENT/PARTY-SPONSORED DAILY NEWSPAPER (FOUNDED JULY 1975) AND RADIO ARE ONLY IN-COUNTRY INFORMATION MEDIA IN EXISTENCE AT PRESENT, THEY ARE BY NO MEANS SOLE SOURCES OF INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO MAURITANIANS WHO AVIDLY WATCH DAKAR TELEVISION AND LISTEN TO INTERNATIONAL RADIO SERVICES (VOA, BBC, FRANCE-INTER, DEUTSCH WELLE) AND DOMESTIC SERVICES OF ALL NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES INCLUDING ALGERIA. EQUALLY SIGNIFICANT, FOREIGN NEWSPAPERS, MAGAZINES, AND BOOKS IN ARABIC AND FRENCH (TWO MOST COMMON WRITTEN LANGUAGES IN MAURITANIA) ARE FREELY AVAILABLE ON NEWSSTANDS AROUND COUNTRY EVEN WHEN THEY CONTAIN INFORMATION OR COMMENTARY DISTASTEFUL TO OR HIGHLY CRITICAL OF GIRM. THUS EXISTENCE OF ONE NEWSPAPER IS MORE REFLECTION OF PRESENT STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT THAN RESULT OF RESTRICTIVE DECISION OF GOVERNMENT / PARTY.

(D) PARA 3: GIRM ARRESTED THOSE OBVIOUSLY GUILTY AND DISMISSED THOSE IMPLICATED PENDING COMPLETION OF ON-GOING ADMINISTRATIVE AND JUDICIAL INVESTIGATIONS.

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3. DRAFT LANGUAGE:

(A) PARA 5 B 2: USG'S NEW EMPHASIS ON HUMAN RIGHTS HAS EVOKED INTEREST AND FAVORABLE REACTION AMONG OFFICIAL AND PRIVATE MAURITANIANS. MISSION HAS BACKED UP INTERNATIONAL NEWS SERVICE REPORTS OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEVELOPMENTS WITH DISTRIBUTION OF FRENCH TEXTS OF KEY USG POLICY DECLARATIONS ON HUMAN RIGHTS TO WIDE RANGE OF SENIOR GIRM OFFICIALS AND TO LOCAL INFORMATION MEDIA. PRESIDENT AND FOREIGN MINISTER HAVE APPLAUDED NEW US EMPHASIS ON HUMAN RIGHTS, ALTHOUGH LATTER CANDIDLY ADMITTED TO AMBASSADOR THAT HE HAD FOUND NUMBER OF ACTIONS TAKEN BY USG BETWEEN JANUARY AND MAY 1977 "NAIVE" AND HENCE "UNSETTLING" BECAUSE OF THEIR DISTURBING IMPACT ON RELATIONS BETWEEN US AND NUMBER OF IMPORTANT MEMBERS OF INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY. MOREOVER, US POLICIES AND ACTIONS RE HUMAN RIGHTS OF BLACK MAJORITIES IN SOUTHERN AFRICA AND OF PALESTINIANS IN OCCUPIED WEST BANK WILL BE CLOSELY MONITORED BY GOVERNMENT AND OPINION LEADERS IN THIS ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY AND ARAB LEAGUE MEMBER STATE. THEIR EVALUATIONS OF US STANCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN THESE KEY AREAS WILL CONSTITUTE MAJOR FACTOR IN SHIFTING ULTIMATE MAURITANIAN VIEW OF US HUMAN RIGHTS EFFORTS.

(B) PARA 5 B3: ON-GOING INTERNATIONAL DISCUSSION OF HUMAN RIGHTS PROMPTED AND SUSTAINED BY NEW US EMPHASIS HAS RAISED CONSCIOUSNESS OF OFFICIAL AND PRIVATE MAURITANIANS AND WILL PROBABLY PROMPT THEM TO (I) RENEW GIRM'S COMMITMENT TO HUMAN RIGHTS, AND (II) TO INSIST ON CAREFUL OBSERVANCE OF CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL PROCEDURES AND GUARANTEES BY GOVERNMENT AND ITS ORGANS.

4. FINAL OBSERVATION (IN RE PARA 4B): WHILE GIRM SUPPORTS US HUMAN RIGHTS EMPHASIS AND MAY WELL REDOUBLE ITS OWN EFFORTS TO OBSERVE ITS AND INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY'S STANDARDS, GIRM IS UNLIKELY TO SPEAK OUT PUBLICLY OR PLAY PROMINENT SUPPORT ROLE IN INTERNATIONAL ARENA. TO CONTRARY, ACUTELY CONSCIOUS OF ITS OWN POLITICAL WEAKNESS AND CONCERNED WITH ADVANCING CONFIDENTIAL

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ITS OWN URGENT POLITICAL AND SECURITY INTERESTS, LSRM CAN BE COUNTED ON NOT RPT NOT TO OPPOSE AFRICAN AND ARAB CAUCUS MAJORITIES EXCEPT PERHAPS BY ABSENCE OF ABSTENTION.

HANDYSIDE

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